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Monday, August 3, 2009 at 4:52PM

Is technology about the tools and what about a toolbelt? Part 1

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Yes... Maybe... Sort of ...

Professional development for teachers should focus on helping teachers develop their own Life-Long-Learning Toolbelt regardless of what every district has on their professional development agenda. The greatest characteristic that a teacher can have is a desire to learn themselves. While teachers can and will continue to learn in traditional ways, education as a whole will not implement technology well until teaching as a profession embraces technology as more than a tool to be pulled out at a time of need for a task at hand.

My Life-Long-Learning toolbelt includes 5 essential tools (not company or site specific) that would help every educator with the process of becoming a life-long-learner. Most newcomers to the power of technology for education talk about a sense of being overwhelmed, the difficulty of determining where to start, and a steep learning curve once they decide to learn more. Instead of focusing professional development experiences on the "cool" new tool or "buzz" word that gets forgotten easily, walk through the following five steps that focus on "learning how to learn".

1. Step One - Researching = Techniques for finding like minded professionals and information for directly impacting your school or classroom work. *(Advanced Search Techniques)*
2. Step Two - Reading = Collect your resources and research into a personalized center of knowledge that is virtual, timely, clean, and collaborative. *(Feed Readers)*
3. Step Three - Archiving = Take your resources with you and begin to share with your colleagues to create a personalized and vetted search engine. (*Social Bookmarking*)
4. Step Four - Writing = Reflect on your learning and join the discussion by adding your thoughts and expertise into the collective knowledge base for all to see, discuss, and critique. (Blog Writing)
5. Step Five - Conversing = Move your learning away from a limited traditional learning network into a multifaceted professional learning network. (Social

Project(SM)

1. SMeech's Presentations
2. I Education Apps Review
3. Techlearning.com Blog
4. Johns Hopkins University - ISTE Leadership Program
5. The Ed Revolution - Postponed

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Networking)

Much of the previous is not necessarily unique or completely original as my thoughts have been molded by 14 years of classroom teaching, the experience of working with some amazing educators, countless professional development experiences and a vast array of virtual learning experiences from the experts in the tech ed field.

My experience says that these types of professional development experiences tend to draw smaller crowds at conferences vs. learning experiences based on indvidual tools. Is that true? If so, why?

Do teachers eveen need a toolbelt like this? If and when one accepts that every teacher does need a Life-Long-Learning Toolbelt, than we need to answer some more questions!

- Are there specific tools that set themselves apart?
- Is my toolbelt missing anything?
- Is it the proper toolbelt?
- Do administrators need their own toolbelt?

Is technology about the tools? Part 2 will focus on why specific tools set themselves apart and how it is about the tool!

Scott Meech | in Educational Thoughts, Techlearning Crosspost | tagged Life Long Learning, Tools

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Reader Comments (5)

Yes Scott! I think your right on. Teachers do need this type of tool belt. Having some of these tools alone helps immensely with the motivation to be a life long learner. This summer I have been experimenting with my own tool belt and simply trying to establish these individual tools and see how they can best work together. I think that unfortunately as teachers if we even see the need for professional development, we only see Step 1 - researching, as the end all. To me now, its more about seeing the possibilities and how much more interesting my job becomes when I expand professional development with the rest of the tools! I still have a lot to learn...but I'm really liking what I have discovered so far!

August 4, 2009 | Jason

Great post smeech!
I agree that educators need to reflect on their practice on a regular basis. However, many are shy about writing and sharing their reflections in a public forum. It's hard to be a transparent thinker and kudos to those bloggers who are!!

August 9, 2009 | Charlene

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Excellent point Charlene ... My answer is that over half of all my blog reflections are never posted. You don't have to post any of it. We should still reflect.

October 15, 2009 | Scott Meech

I believe in your idea of the tool belt. The biggest "tool" should be our desire to learn more everyday and share it with our students and other teachers. What good is it to learn something new if you do not share it!

October 19, 2009 | Tall order, Smeech!

Thank you for a thought provoking presentation today on just this topic. I agree that it is not about teaching technology for the sake of teaching technology. It is what will I do with this technology to teach, grow, and develop.

October 24, 2009 | J. Shields

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